

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

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FM AMEMBASSY VIENNA

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, AU

SUBJECT: KIRCHSCHLAEGER RELECTED PRESIDENT OF AUSTRIA

REF: VIENNA 5470

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: KIRCHSCHLAEGER ELECTED AUSTRIAN PRESIDENT ON JUNE 23 BY MARGIN OF 153,000 VOTES (51.7 PERCENT), THANKS TO SOCIALIST VIENNA WHICH GAVE KIRCHSCHLAEGER LEAD OF 240,000 VOTES. END SUMMARY.

2. SOCIALIST CANDIDATE FOREIGN MINISTER KIRCHSCHLAEGER WAS ELECTED AUSTRIA'S FIFTH POSTWAR PRESIDENT ON JUNE 23 BY MARGIN OF ABOUT 153,000 VOTES OR 51.7 PERCENT (OR 2,392,151) OF VALID VOTES CAST. PEOPLE'S PARTY CANDIDATE LUGGER RECEIVED 48.3 PERCENT (2,238,680). WITH VOTING OBLIGATORY, VOTER TURNOUT WAS 94.1 PERCENT; INVALID VOTES AMOUNTED TO 102,174 (SOME PART OF WHICH COMMUNIST VOTE SINCE KPO LEADERSHIP INSTRUCTED FOLLOWING TO CAST BLANK BALLOTS).

3. PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF RETURNS INDICATES MARGIN
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OF VICTORY OF ABOUT 153,00 VOTES WAS DELIVERED,

AS TRADITIONALLY, BY DISCIPLINED SOCIALIST
BATTALIONS OF VIENNA WHERE KIRCHSCHLAEGER
GATHERED IN OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF 63.0 PER-
CENT OF VOTE (LEAD OF 241,000 VOTES).
KIRCHSCHLAEGER ALSO DID BETTER THAN HIS NATION-
WIDE AVERAGE IN EASTERN PROVINCES OF BURGENLAND
(5.9 PERCENT) AND CARINTHIA (56.1 PERCENT),
WHILE LUGGER, IN CONTRAST, DID VERY WELL IN
WESTERN AUSTRIA: VORARLBERG (64.4 PERCENT),
TYROL (70.1) AND SALZBURG (52.0). VOTING PATTERN
TENDED TO REAFFIRM DICHOTOMY OF SOCIALIST-
ORIENTED EASTERN AUSTRIA VERSUS CONSERVATIVE-
ORIENTED WESTERN AUSTRIA.

4. WHILE BOTH CANDIDATES EMPHASIZED IN CAMPAIGN
THAT IT WAS CONTEST OF PERSONALITIES, NOT POLITICAL
PARTIES, KIRCHSCHLAEGER VICTORY IS ALSO CLEARLY
VICTORY FOR CHANCELLOR KREISKY SINCE KIRCHSCHLAEGER
WAS KREISKY'S CHOICE AGAINST KNOWN OPPOSITION IN
SOME ELEMENTS OF SOCIALIST PARTY LEADERSHIP.
KREISKY, AUSTRIA'S MOST ABLE POLITICIAN AND POLITICAL SAGE,
HAS THEREFORE SEEN HIS RISKY POLITICAL GAMBLE OF RUNNING A
NON-SOCIALIST ON SOCIALIST PARTY TICKET REALIZED.
KREISKY AND SOCIALIST PARTY WILL NO DOUBT USE
KIRCHSCHLAEGER VICTORY TO CLAIM THAT SOCIALISTS
HAVE NOW STOPPED, IF NOT TURNED AROUND
AUSTRIAN DOMESTIC POLITICAL TREND WHICH, ON BASIS
OF SEVERAL RECENT PROVINCIAL ELECTIONS, HAS BEEN
RUNNING SLIGHTLY IN FAVOR OF CONSERVATIVES.

5. IN WAKE OF KIRCHSCHLAEGER VICTORY, IMMEDIATE
TASK OF KREISKY WILL BE TO SELECT REPLACEMENT FOR
KIRCHSCHLAEGER AS FOREIGN MINISTER. POLITICAL
CONSENSUS HERE CONTINUES TO CONSIDER AUSTRIAN UN
PERMREP AMBASSADOR JANKOWITSCH AS MOST LIKELY
CHOICE FOR POSITION. KIRCHSCHLAEGER MAY ALSO
USE OCCASION ON APPOINTMENT OF NEW FOREIGN
MINISTER TO CARRY OUT VERY MINOR RESHUFFLE OF
GOVERNMENT, WITH MOST LIKELY STEP ADDITION OF
STATE SECRETARY TO AGRICULTURE MINISTRY, TO
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HANDLE PROBLEMS OF MOUNTAIN PEASANTRY.

6. SIMPLE CEREMONY OF SWEARING IN OF NEW
AUSTRIAN PRESIDENT BEFORE PARLIAMENT, TO WHICH
CHIEFS OF MISSION TO BE INVITED, WILL TAKE
PLACE JULY 8.

7. US INTEREST WOULD HAVE BEEN EQUALLY WELL SERVED

BY ELECTION OF EITHER CANDIDATE. IMMEDIATE
ADVANTAGE OF KIRCHSCHLAEGER VICTORY IS THAT HE
IS WELL AND FAVORABLY KNOWN TO WASHINGTON AND
EMBASSY VIENNA AND HAS HAD IN PAST IDENTICAL
OR SIMILAR VIEWPOINTS WITH US ON ALL IMPORTANT
INTERNATIONAL ISSUES. WE ANTICIPATE BEING ABLE
TO WORK WITH KIRCHSCHLAEGER AS PRESIDENT WITH
EASE AND TO OUR MUTUAL BENEFIT. HUMES

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